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ABSTRACT

A practicum addressed the emergent literacy needs of preschoolers at a daycare center. Goals were to increase: (1) the amount of time parents read aloud to their children to 15 minutes a day; (2) the number of library books at the daycare center from 40 to 200; and (3) the number of volunteers at the center from none to 4 who would read aloud to the children. A parent information campaign, a grant to fund the purchase of library books, and recruitment of volunteers addressed the goals. All three objectives were successfully met, with the most rewarding result being the tremendous growth in the number of library books at the center. (Three tables of data are included; 21 references and 6 appendixes--containing questionnaires, data from questionnaires, and samples of parent information letters--are attached.) (Author/SR)

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Improving Preschoolers' Literacy Acquisition Through an Intergenerational, Volunteer Read-Aloud Program, Parent Information, and an Enlarged Source of Library Books

by

Patricia McNulty Budnik

Cluster XXV

A Practicum II Report Presented to Ed.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1991

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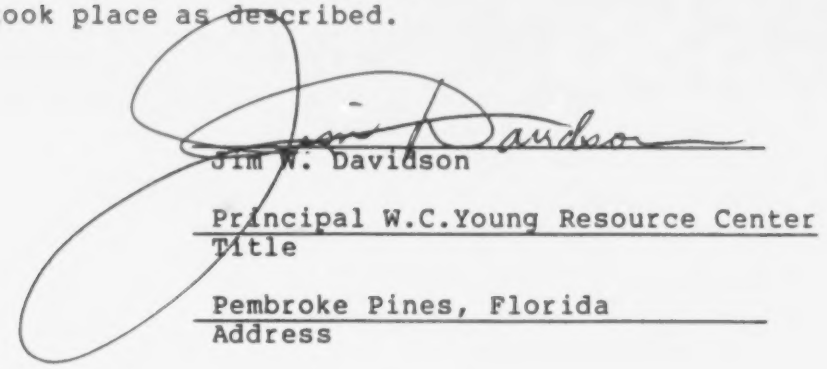

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This practicum report was submitted by Patricia M. Budnik under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

July 12, 1991
Date of Final Approval of Report

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ABSTRACT

Improving Preschoolers' Literacy Acquisition Through an Intergenerational, Volunteer Read-Aloud Program, Parent Information, and an Enlarged Source of Library Books. Budnik, Patricia M., 1991: Practicum Report, Nova University Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Day Care Centers/Preschool Children/Early Childhood Education/ Reading/Language Acquisition/Young Children/Emergent Literacy/Intergenerational Programs

This practicum addressed the emergent literacy needs of preschoolers at a daycare center. The literature indicates that reading aloud to children is the one common thread to becoming literate. It is often overlooked due to lack of time, the scarcity of printed matter, and little realization of the importance of parents as reading role models.

The writer's goals were: (a) to increase the amount of time parents read aloud to their children to 15 minutes per day, (b) to increase the amount of library books at the daycare center from 40 to 200, and (c) to increase the number of volunteers at the center from none to four who would read aloud to the children. In addressing these goals, the writer implemented a parent information campaign, wrote a grant to fund the purchase of library books, and recruited volunteer readers.

The practicum's objective with the most rewarding result was the tremendous growth in the number of library books at the center through the grant and donations. One faithful volunteer, who served the entire time, proved to be more valuable than a larger number of volunteers who dropped out. Parents made many positive comments to the daycare director about the reading information they received. They increased their frequency of reading and the amount of time they read to their child. All three objectives were successfully met.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The daycare center in which this practicum took place is in a newly developed western section of a city in the southeastern section of the United States. It is part of an educational community center unique in its make up. The center consists of a middle school, indoor and outdoor racquet ball courts, a community school, a dinner theater under construction, and the licensed daycare center which serves the residents of the community and the staff of the middle school.

This city with a population of 70,000 is located about 15 miles from the county seat. It has an area of approximately 34 square miles and is bordered on the east by a coastal city and extends westerly to a conservation district. Residents and visitors enjoy a relaxed lifestyle geared to the outdoors in a climate where the temperature is warm the year round.

The general terrain is flat with an elevation of 7 to 8 feet above sea level. Needed services and goods for the area are supplied by 39 neighborhood and community shopping centers. Numerous cultural advantages are provided in larger metropolitan areas just 30 to 45 minutes north and south of this smaller city.

A commission consisting of a mayor, vice mayor, and three commissioners serving four year staggered terms, and a city manager, form the city's government. City administration is carried out by the city manager appointed by the commission. Financial operations, record keeping, and internal auditing are under the city's director of finance. The daycare center is a joint operation of the county school board, the city, and the state. Its financial operation is audited by the city.

The police department employs 117 sworn officers and 30 administrative personnel which provide coverage for the city. It operates 109 vehicles and has provided training for many special services, such as a dive team, canine, and the mounted police which patrol the extensive public park that borders the daycare center. The city also has four fire stations in this class two city. The daycare center is surrounded by acres of undeveloped land that leave it isolated but not unprotected.

Three recreation centers help to provide a year-round comprehensive recreation program. The daycare center is in a complex of new, very modernly designed buildings that will eventually become another recreational and educational center of the community. It is labeled a resource center that is funded by the city under its enterprise funds. Other educational sources consist of four public elementary schools and two middle schools. Four high schools are in neighboring communities. Higher educational facilities are offered by the

state university system and private colleges in the county and in adjacent counties.

Mass transportation is provided through minimal bus service to the larger malls and beaches, but the majority of people depend on personal vehicles. Two international airports are within a 25 to 45 minute drive, and a small general aviation facility is located within the city. Two controlled access highways provide north and south transportation. At present there are not enough arteries to prevent rush hour gridlock. The road to the daycare center is not congested as long as the surrounding area is undeveloped.

Medical services are provided by a 301 bed general hospital employing over 600 personnel with a medical staff in excess of 250 physicians and dentists. A major expansion of this facility is anticipated within the next five years. Health care needs are also served by another hospital's satellite emergency center located in a nearby city. Since all the existing medical facilities are located on the eastern side of the city, plans are now underway for the establishment of a major hospital on the western side in the undeveloped area near the daycare center.

South of the daycare center, across a major highway is the site of a large luxury retirement village consisting of acres of condominium apartment buildings. Access is limited to residents and their guests through a security guarded entrance gate. Most of the retirees' recreational needs are met on the premises, but, because of the size of this

facility, much of the undeveloped land surrounding the daycare center will become business oriented. The socioeconomic make up of the community is generally middle class except for the retirement village which is geared towards the upper-middle class.

Author's Work Setting and Role

The daycare center in which this practicum was conducted is a new facility within an educational, recreational complex of buildings called a resource center. It has been in operation for just over a year and a half. It is brightly decorated and immaculate with large areas for each age group and separate rooms for the infants and toddlers. Approximately 97 children were served during the practicum with a caregiver teacher and aides for each group. There were 13 infants, 8 children between 12 months and 18 months old, 9 children from 18 months to 24 months old, 22 children who were 2 years old, 22 children at 3 years old, and the oldest grouping was made up of 22 children who were 4 to 5 years old.

Child care is given from 6:45 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. five days weekly. Part-time care is also available. The center meets all state, county, and city requirements. Resident fees are available to the inhabitants of the city and the staff of the resource center. A 5% discount per child is given to families with more than one child attending the daycare center. Non residents pay a higher rate. Part-time preschool

is available for only the 2 to 4-year-olds. The highest rate is for infants starting at $75 per week. The rates for the other ages are $70 for 1-year-olds, $65 for 2-year-olds and $60 for 3 to 4-year-olds per week. Also there is a registration fee of $75 for the regular 10 month school year and a $25 registration fee for the summer program. These fees cover supplies and are not refundable. The center follows the county school calendar as to holidays but it remains open during school vacation periods.

The center's director is a teacher certified in early childhood education. She oversees that developmentally appropriate activities, experiences, and toys are given to the children. Age appropriate, constructive disciplinary practices are used for the children in their care and discipline is not associated with food, rest, or toileting. Parents are given information sheets that address such issues as clothing, lunch and snacks, arrival and dismissal, registration and fees, illness and medical forms, conferences, vacations, napping, toys, and field trips. A weekly newsletter outlining some of the activities at school informs the parents and encourages their participation in many events whenever possible.

At present the majority of the children come from a middle class socioeconomic group including single parents and a small number of minority children. The adjoining middle school's student population reflects the same racial make up. In contrast many of the volunteer readers are upper-middle

class residents of the nearby luxury retirement village. Many of the volunteers are absentee grandparents and retired professionals themselves.

The writer has been a classroom teacher in the public schools for 24 years. Her educational background includes elementary and highschool completed in a northeastern public school system, a bachelor's degree in education, a master's degree in elementary administration and supervision, a specialist's equivalency in elementary education, and three years of completed classwork in a doctoral program in early and middle childhood. Higher education has all taken place at private colleges. Her teaching experience has been all elementary levels from kindergarten through sixth grade, plus adult education in a community school.

Positions held by the writer have been team leader for fourth and sixth grades in an open pod school in which she has taught for the past 17 years, reading systems facilitator, reading teacher for a Title I after school program, supervising teacher for two interns, chairperson of the test committee, the social committee, and the quality instructional incentives program. She represented her faculty as union steward for the past nine years and as the alternate for the last two years. The writer was a reading tutor in an after school program for three years and was the recipient of two mini-grants totalling $1000 from the Foundation for Excellence in Education. They were awarded for reading and writing oriented projects.

During this practicum the writer assumed several roles including that of a second grade teacher of approximately 28 minority students and an alternate union steward. For this practicum she was the director of the volunteer reading project at the nearby daycare center. She was also involved in the acquisition of age appropriate books to be used in the daycare center in the implementation of her practicum. She supplemented the newsletter on a monthly basis with reading information for the parents.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

It has been the writer's teaching experience to observe an increasingly larger percentage of students each year who are reading at a remedial level, one to two years below their grade level. This past year, 37% of the students entering second grade at the writer's school were reading at a preprimer level. It is obvious that there are literacy gaps in the prereading skills that should be experienced in the homes and daycare centers before entering school.

With a mobile society many children do not have grandparents living in their area and due to the increasing cost of living, many mothers must work outside the home leaving the care of their children to daycare centers rather than to extended family members. This leaves the children without the benefits of being given time and attention that would come with intergenerational experiences. Children of busy working parents who have no grandparents often miss out on being read to aloud. If parents do not take the time to read to their children, the first and most important example of a reading role model is lost.

Literacy is a problem in the home, the school, the community, and the nation today. Oral language in the home is the beginning of literacy acquisition. Reading to children

gives them the opportunity to hear an enriched vocabulary. If parents do little reading at home for themselves as a leisure time activity, or read aloud to others, their children will not witness the value of reading or develop an extensive vocabulary.

Daycare staff members have few books and little time to read aloud to children in their care due to the demands of a group setting. After the working parents of preschoolers pick their children up, the time left in the evening is used for the next day's preparation. Public libraries are encouraging parents and daycare workers to read aloud to their children and to make full use of the resource of books available to them. Again, the lack of time and the inconvenience of traveling to another facility to check out books are detrimental to reading aloud and encouraging literacy.

Children who attend the daycare center need more exposure to children's literature to foster their prereading skills, more contact with adults their grandparents' ages to enhance intergenerational experiences, and access to an enlarged and varied source of printed material to aid in their literacy acquisition.

Problem Documentation

An interview with the daycare center's director acknowledged she had no volunteers to read aloud to the children or give them some individual time and attention that would encourage the acquisition of language. These centers

are by necessity group oriented with great demands on the caregivers' time. They are also overlooked when it comes to volunteer organizations which are geared more towards school-age children.

Funding is an ongoing problem with little money left for acquiring a supply of books. An examination of the daycare center's library disclosed they had approximately 40 books. The public school library association recommends at least five books per child at the elementary level. At the proposal stage of this practicum there were only 43 children from ages 2 to 5 with a needs estimate of books at 215, leaving a shortfall of 175 books. The goal of 200 books was sufficient at that time. During the practicum the number of children increased significantly. Counting the 67 children from ages 2 to 5-year-olds, the needs estimate of books would number 335, leaving a shortage of 295 books. If the average price of a book were $5, there would be a minimal cost of $1,475 to build an on site library.

The literature points out the importance of reading aloud to preschoolers and having printed matter available to children. Many of the nation's preschool age children are in day care center. It becomes imperative that a portion of the day is spent in reading to them and that books are accessible. An advertisement in the local paper asking grandparents to read to children at the daycare center resulted in numerous phone calls to the writer. The project was called GRO, Grandparents Read Out. This provided proof

there was a large base of interest for retired adults to be volunteer readers. Since transportation to the regional library is a problem for seniors it is even more important that a library is established at the center.

Making printed matter available to children in the home encourages literacy. Questioning of parents revealed that very little exists in the way of newspapers, magazine subscriptions, reference sources, or personal libraries in their homes. Parents need to be encouraged to provide reading materials and to read aloud to their children.

Causative Analysis

The rising cost of living forces both parents to work outside the home in many instances in order to support their family, leaving little time for leisure activities, such as reading appears to be. Parents do not realize their impact as reading role models for their children. Becoming literate begins with the acquisition of language in the home. Reading aloud, repeating nursery rhymes, singing, and just talking to children facilitates the development of their vocabulary.

Reading aloud is often neglected because parents tend to address the immediate needs of the home in the evening such as food preparation, clean up, and organization for the next day that appear more urgent. There is just too little time left over to give to children. Preschoolers without grandparents living in the area miss out on the time and individual attention that can come from intergenerational

experiences and an extended family.

Daycare centers are by necessity group oriented with great demands on the caregivers' time. They also operate on limited funds with only small appropriations for books. Volunteer groups and fund raising are organized more for school-age children, while daycare centers are often overlooked. Absentee grandparents have little chance for contact with preschoolers unless invited into daycare centers as volunteers.

The Related Literature

A review of the literature found that many professionals have written about the importance of reading aloud to children. Jim Trelease's (1989) new read-aloud handbook urges parents to spend about fifteen minutes a day reading to their children. This time of reading together reassures, entertains, informs, explains, arouses curiosity, inspires, and strengthens children's reading, writing, and speaking skills through improving their listening comprehension. Parents are the prime role models for language acquisition.

Wahl (1988) listed ideas for parents to foster an interest in and love for reading. She suggested activities that did not focus on specific reading skills but would enhance the parents' performance as reading role models.

The retirement community was found to be a rich resource of people with time to share with children according to Cooledge and Wurster (1985). The benefits of tutorial

instruction on student achievement have been well documented, but few have examined the effects of intergenerational tutoring. The use of volunteers listening to children read and discussing the stories have shown that significant gains will be obtained, as measured by reading achievement tests.

In the booklet prepared by Marilyn R. Binkley (1988) for the Department of Education based on the report "Becoming a Nation of Readers," the Commissioners found that parents should read aloud to preschool children and informally teach them about reading. Reading aloud was rated as the single most important activity for building knowledge required for eventual success in reading. Since not all parents find it easy to schedule a regular time for reading to their children, the Commissioners went on to suggest that a relative, a friend, or senior citizen volunteer read to children.

Another booklet, written by Kathryn Perkinson (1989) for the Department of Education titled "Helping Your Child Use the Library," encourages parents of preschoolers to visit the public library weekly. Many libraries have programs that include reading aloud because this age is a critical time in the development of language skills. Special training for childcare workers is offered at many libraries with the goal of making exposure to books and reading aloud an integral part of daycare activities.

A study presented the premise to parents and teachers that preschool children who usually attend to print in their

environment begin to acquire reading skills more quickly. These children have a greater chance of learning to read having recognized the relationships between oral and written modes of language (Bertrand & Fairchild, 1984).

In a study of how five-year-old children become literate (Kita, 1979), twenty kindergarten children were shown four pictures in an interview and then asked to complete a writing sample. The use of print in a meaningful context provides children with opportunities to express themselves and develop a reason for reading and writing, as suggested by the study.

Wells (1990) found that children in a literate culture become actively involved in making sense of the literacy events they experience. The processes in which they learn to read are very similar to those involved in learning to talk. This learning can take place at any age but it does require opportunities for participation in joint literacy events with more mature members of the literate culture.

Compelling evidence now exists that young children begin the process of literacy development before they enter school, according to Freeman and Hatch (1989). Emergent literacy portrays the children as active constructors of language who acquire literacy in everyday activities and interaction with their world. They suggest that adults should read aloud daily and provide opportunities for children to interact with material presented in books in various ways. A large collection of children's literature of all types should be available.

More children are spending time in group programs that provide care and education prior to kindergarten. Willer and Bredekamp (1990) want to ensure that adults who care for children provide a stimulating and developmentally appropriate environment. When parents and other significant adults are unable to provide the close attention that a child needs, it results in missed educational opportunities that might not be replaced.

Mersereau and Glover (1990) developed a plan for bringing elementary school children and the residents of nursing homes together. It benefited both the children and the residents by helping the children gain a more accepting attitude toward aging and at the same time, cheered up the lives of the elderly. The hour visits included reading to the residents, singing, playing games, and sharing. The children grew in their capacity for patience, tolerance, understanding of the aging process, concern for senior citizens, and to feel comfortable with the elderly. Preschoolers at the daycare center would also benefit in many of the same ways from an intergenerational friendship program.

A survey of elementary school children's preferences when being read to made many recommendations (Mendoza, 1985). Children overwhelmingly enjoy being read to and the size of the group doesn't matter. Many were read to at home, mainly by their mother. Both parents, in particular the fathers, should be encouraged to read to their children because their role model is vital in their children's motivation to read.

Most reading in the home occurred less than once a week and as the children's age increased, the frequency of reading aloud decreased. Reading aloud to children should continue throughout the elementary years.

Nancy A. Maurogenes (1990) stresses that teachers and principals must make concrete and specific suggestions as to how parents can help their children become literate. Most things parents can do involve time, attention, and sensitivity rather than money. Research shows most parents are willing to help educate their children but do not know how to go about it without appearing to be interfering. She suggests workshops that give demonstration, practice, participation, and discussion, are more helpful than dittoed directives about literacy activities. She gives lists of activities that can be done by parents to encourage oral language, writing, and reading.

Recent research in reading and literacy acquisition emphasizes its developmental, learner-centered nature and that parental involvement in children's learning is very important (Quintero & Velarde, 1990). Many Spanish speaking parents want to improve their literacy skills in order to help their children with reading and school work. A project was developed that invited parents to participate in a program at school for reading with their children. Its purposes were to teach parents of children not yet in first grade and also of primary age to help their children with

reading, and at the same time improve the parents own literacy skills. It provided literacy activities that parents could do with their children at home. It also encouraged the parents of young children to seek reading instruction in Spanish and English at least once a week. Improving the literacy attitudes within families generates better readers.

The importance of providing a daycare center with services such as, volunteer readers, an enlarged library, and a parent information campaign is best emphasized by Susan Ryan (1989) who states,

> Today's world must address complex problems: protection of environment, exploration of space, establishment of world peace. Tomorrow's world will present those challenges and more....Minds imbued with imagination, empowered by the intricacies inherent in creativity can find those answers. The future rests on those minds. Preschool literary experiences are a beginning towards that world of enlightenment. (p.75)

A common thread that runs throughout the literature is the ingredient of reading aloud to children that is basic to becoming literate. It is up to adults to structure their children's environment to ensure literacy opportunities and provide intergenerational experiences that give children the attention they crave and the chance to interact with their environment in a positive manner.

Chapter III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Statement of General Goals

The writer's goals in general were to address the emergent literacy needs of preschoolers at the daycare center and to enhance the children's intergenerational experiences. Literacy begins with language acquisition in the homes and daycare centers. Reading aloud to children is the one common thread to becoming literate and it is often overlooked due to the lack of time and the scarcity of printed matter. The wealth of resource in senior citizens as volunteers to read aloud to the preschoolers is untapped. It was the writer's intention to encourage reading aloud by retirees to preschoolers, increase the amount of books in the center's library, and inform the parents of their importance as reading role models.

Behavioral Expectations

The specific objectives stated with the behavior expected at the end of implementation, the standards of performance to be achieved, and the assessment instruments that would measure the behavior for this practicum were chosen as follows:

1. Over a period of eight months, 50% of all the parents responding would increase the amount of time they

read aloud to their children to 15 minutes per day as measured by a pre and post questionnaire.

2. Over a period of eight months, the amount of 40 library books at the daycare center would increase to 200 as counted by the writer and verified by the director.
3. Over a period of eight months, the writer would accept an increase in volunteers from none to four who would read during four half hour time slots each week, during the second half of the practicum, as counted by the writer and verified by the director.

Some desired goals not stated as specifics were, that senior citizens would feel wanted and needed as readers at the center, that volunteer programs at daycare centers would become more popular, that book donations would increase, and that parents would continue reading to their children aloud through their elementary school years.

The writer kept a calendar and a sign in sheet at the daycare center to log the volunteers. On a trial run the sign in sheets disappeared so it was necessary to check and record the volunteer hours periodically.

Over a long period of time some books became damaged and needed to be discarded which was noted in the total count of books gained through a variety of sources. The writer wrote and won a grant to purchase books for the center.

Although a large turnover in the center's clientele was unlikely during the school year, the writer attempted to

include incoming parents in the informational campaign and sought periodic responses to the literature being sent home rather than be dependent on one post questionnaire. There would be gaps in the responses if there were epidemics of childhood diseases.

Evaluation Instruments

The objectives were measured by a pre and post questionnaire (see Appendices A and B) sent home to parents, questioning their time spent reading aloud to their children. Parents received monthly information on reading and periodic response sheets as to the value of the information.

The writer listed all the books presently at the center. It was necessary to keep a file on the books by adding all the titles of the books acquired during the practicum. A count of the number of books was taken to determine if an increase to 200 was reached.

The volunteer sign in sheets recorded the number of volunteers that read aloud at the center, and the amount of time they logged for the purposes of this practicum, and the requirement of the center.

The writer determined if the first objective had been met by comparing the responses of the first questionnaire to the last to see if parents had increased their reading aloud time to 15 minutes per day. Other responses included reading information and parental attitudes upon receiving it.

The second objective showed an increase by a simple count of books at the center. The third objective gave evidence of any volunteers through the sign in sheets and the log for their hours. The volunteers dropped out and new ones were added so an average of four volunteers and four half hours per week would be acceptable through the second half of the practicum. The first half of the practicum was devoted to recruiting the volunteers.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Briefly stated, the problem was that children who attended the daycare center needed more exposure to children's literature to foster their prereading skills, more contact with adults their grandparents' ages to enhance intergenerational experiences, and access to an enlarged and varied source of printed material to aid in their literacy acquisition.

Addressing the emergent literacy needs of preschool age children is an important task. A review of the literature pointed to many problems that could interfere with the acquisition of language, the first step to becoming literate. While some language deterrents can be resolved clinically there are others that could be helped by informed parents in their homes. Poverty and cultural beliefs such as, children should be seen and not heard, have an adverse effect on the child's recognition of the relationship between speaking and the written word.

Most of these problems could not be solved through a practicum except for the one common thread running throughout the literature, that of reading aloud to children. It was the writer's experience to be read to frequently as a child and to be exposed to a set of good literature books in her home

even though it was a luxury item for a farm family of very modest means. With the advent of television, children tend not to see the family reading in the evening. Even if books in the home are luxury items today, it is still possible for even the poorest child to have a public library card and have access to the world's greatest literature. The value of reading aloud to children for at least 15 minutes a day has been stressed by many professionals.

In Jim Trelease's (1989) new read aloud handbook he urges parents to spend time together with their children since they are the prime role models for language acquisition. Some books lend themselves to oral reading better than others and he gives many helpful suggestions which the writer passed on to parents in an informational campaign. He sites teachers as the parents principal resource for information and enthusiasm for reading. He suggests short lists of books be given to parents intermittently. Research reflects that 58% of parents rarely receive such tips on how to be involved in their children's learning process.

Some suggested activities for parents to enhance their performance as reading role models are reading road signs, recipes as they prepared food, directions for games and making things, and news stories. Wahl's (1988) list was geared towards involvement in everyday activities that would foster an interest in reading. The focus was not on specific decoding skills but the development of a love for reading and its value. The writer distributed this list to parents.

Intergenerational tutoring has been well received in both elementary and secondary schools. Reading achievement tests have shown significant gains when a volunteer program has been in place. Cooledge and Wurster (1985) noted the rich resource of people with time to share in retirement communities. This source is virtually untapped when it comes to volunteer groups reaching out to the daycare centers.

Reading aloud to children was rated as the single most important activity in building a literate society according to the Commissioners in the report, "Becoming a Nation of Readers," which was condensed into a booklet form and prepared by Marilyn R. Binkley (1988) for the Department of Education. If parents of preschoolers lack time to read to their children the Commissioners went on to suggest that relatives, grandparents, friends or senior citizen volunteers read aloud to children because that activity is vital to their emergent literacy.

Libraries have joined the campaign to inform daycare workers and parents concerning the value of reading aloud to preschoolers. Another Department of Education booklet "Helping Your Child Use the Library," written by Kathryn Perkinson (1989) urges parents to visit the public library weekly. This is the kind of information the writer would like to pass on to the parents by placing this booklet in their hands.

If children are given the chance to recognize the relationship between oral and written modes of language

according to Bertrand and Fairchild (1984), they will have a greater chance of learning to read. Their study presented to teachers and parents the premise that preschool children who attend to print in their environment begin to acquire reading skills more quickly. It was the writer's goal to provide the printed matter in the form of an enlarged library at the daycare center.

Kita (1979) studied kindergarten children and how they became literate. Children that were shown pictures in an interview were given an opportunity to express themselves in a writing sample. Listening to children discuss a story or draw their favorite part gives them a reason for reading and writing. The writer encouraged the volunteers to read for 15 minutes and give the children opportunities to discuss the story with them for the other part of the half hour-time block.

Freeman and Hatch (1989) found compelling evidence that the process of literacy development begins in young children before they begin school. They also suggest that adults should read aloud to children daily and provide opportunities for them to interact with the material presented in books in various ways such as discussions or drawings. A large collection of children's literature of all types should be available. It was the writer's goal to provide a collection for the daycare center's library.

Adults who care for children should provide a stimulating and developmentally appropriate environment.

Willer and Bredekamp (1990) found that more children are spending time in group programs that offer care and education prior to kindergarten. If parents and other significant adults, such as the children's grandparents or caregivers, are unable to give the individual attention a child needs, the resulting missed educational opportunities may not be replaced. It was the writer's intention to assist intergenerational experiences through volunteers that could give individual children attention as well as reading to groups.

Workshops for parents as suggested by Mavrogenes (1990) on helping their children become literate would be more effective than sending home lists of activities. She acknowledges that supportive logistics must be worked out, such as providing free child care and holding the workshops in churches, apartments, and community halls or wherever parents could gather. Such meetings should be supported by community leaders, like clergy, social workers, and sports coaches, who could help promote attendance. The writer found the idea stimulating but impractical for her as one person. The lists of activities given were an excellent resource to pass on to parents as part of an informative series.

Quintero and Velude's (1990) literacy project emphasized the importance of the parents' roll in helping their children learn to read. Literacy behaviors are not restricted to books and the parents are encouraged to participate in learning activities, language experience activities and many home

activities such as making pancakes by reading about the ingredients and following the directions. Family projects should consist of at least three steps, with directions if possible. The writer incorporated their ideas as part of the parent information goal.

An intergenerational friendship program (Mersereau & Glover, 1990) could provide children with the opportunity to develop a more positive attitude towards the elderly and give them a link with the past. The retirement community is an untapped gold mine in time to spare to read to children. Since many of the preschoolers have absentee grandparents, the writer encouraged retirees to read to the children through a volunteer program and perhaps filled a missing need.

The results of a survey on elementary school children's reading preferences, reported on by Alicia Mendoza (1985), gave recommendations the writer used in the parent information series. Given a wide selection of books, children should be allowed to select the book to be read. They should also be told the author and given a brief summary of the plot without giving away any surprizes. Questions pertinent to the story should be encouraged during a follow-up discussion. The stories should be read through and then children should be given a chance to look at the book for themselves.

Description of Selected Solutions

Busy parents need to be informed of the vital importance

they play in being reading role models for their children. The writer extended information to them on promoting literacy in their children through monthly inserts in the center's newsletters. A pre and post parent questionnaire evaluated the success of the informational campaign on providing literacy experiences in the home. The writer accepted a 50% increase in the amount of parents responding to the questionnaire who claim to have instituted a 15 minutes a day read aloud time in their homes. The literature shows this as the common thread to developing literacy in children which the writer stressed to the parents at a meeting where she will be the guest speaker.

Appropriate levels of reading materials needed to be available at the daycare center. The writer increased the amount of books available at the daycare center through providing donations of books from local sources such as the retirement center and churches, buying a subscription for preschool books and winning the grant money for the center's library. The writer also made available magazines from personal subscriptions for the parents to take home. The writer accepted an increase in the number of books at the daycare center to 200 as a measure of success. There were only 40 books at the beginning of the practicum.

In this mobile society many children do not see their grandparents often. Volunteers from the retirement center can provide intergenerational experiences as well as promote literacy through a read aloud program. The writer coordinated

a volunteer program at the retirement center of senior citizens who hopefully provided the extra attention children crave and promoted literacy through reading aloud to them at the daycare center. The project was named Grandparents Read Out (GRO) and generated volunteers to read aloud at the daycare center during two time slots allowed per day, Monday through Friday, from 10:00 to 10:30 a.m. and from 4:00 to 4:30 p.m. The writer accepted an increase in volunteers from none to four as a measurement of success. The writer advertised in the local papers at the retirement center and spoke to a group.

The ideal situation if the problems were solved would be that the emergent literacy needs of preschoolers would be recognized and met. Parents would become aware of their importance as reading role models and be encouraged to read aloud to their children at least 15 minutes a day. Children's reading materials would be more available in the home and the number of library books at the daycare center would increase and be accessible. Parents, volunteers, and daycare workers would take advantage of the wealth of books in the public libraries. And as an additional element, preschoolers at the daycare center would have contact with volunteer adults their grandparents' ages who would provide intergenerational experiences and give the children the extra attention that could enhance their literacy acquisition.

Report of Action Taken

The writer wrote a grant that was due August 31 for $1000 for books from a community foundation. The grants were awarded November 1. The writer won a grant of $500 from the foundation to buy books. The writer surveyed the books and logged their titles at the daycare's library. Appeals were made to the retirement center and local churches for donations of preschool books.

The writer made arrangements with the daycare director to be the speaker at a meeting for parents to be held in the fall. She developed a questionnaire for parents that would give feedback and a standard of measure of their role as reading models. The questionnaire was distributed in November and again in June.

Advertisements for the local papers were prepared asking for volunteer readers. They were free and ran as a community service. The writer spoke to the editors in charge and the announcements ran the first and the fifteenth of each month. Monthly orientations and feedback sessions for the volunteers that were interested in sharing their experiences were held at the daycare center. The writer had already addressed a meeting of the Psychology Club at the retirement center to recruit volunteer readers.

The writer implemented the volunteer recruitment, the book acquisition, and the parent information programs for the eight months required for the practicum's evaluation.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

There were two factors to measuring Objective One with parents' questionnaires. Over a period of eight months, 50% of the parents responding were to increase the amount of time they read aloud to their children to at least 15 minutes and the frequency of that reading from once a week or less to 15 minutes daily. The prereading questionnaire generated a very positive response showing 13 of 20 parents, 65%, already read to their children daily. This increased even more on the postreading questionnaire to 11 of 14 parents, 79%, who read to their children daily, showing a positive gain of 14% (see Appendices C,D, and E).

Although the goal was 15 minutes daily, 10 of the 20 parents responding to the prereading questionnaire, 50%, claim to have already been reading 15 minutes at a time, and 6 of the 20 parents, 30%, read 30 minutes at a time. On the postreading questionnaire, the number of parents reading the longer amount of time, 30 minutes, increased significantly with 6 of the 14 (43%) reading at least 15 minutes, but 8 of the 14 (57%) parents increased their reading time to 30 minutes giving a positive gain of 27% .

Objective One appears to have been met to a degree at the beginning of the practicum with the prereading

questionnaire (see Table 1).

* Figures Rounded

Table 1. Comparison of Prereading and Postreading Questions on (1) Frequency and (2) Time

Question	Percent Prereading	Percent Postreading	Percent Increased	Percent Decreased
(1) daily	65	79	14	—
once a week	20	21	1	—
once in a while	15	—	—	—
(2) 5 min.	5	—	—	—
10 min.	10	—	—	—
15 min.	50	43	—	7
30 min	30	57	27	—
60 min	5	—	—	—

It was encouraging to the writer to see that parents at this particular daycare center were doing a good job reading to their children and it appears they raised their own goal to 30 minutes as measured by the postreading questionnaire. The writer sent home information from the literature on the parents' importance as reading role models and spending at least 15 minutes daily reading to their children. She also supplied the center with her own magazine subscriptions for the parents to take home, enabling them to increase the availability of printed matter for their children. The director noted the many positive comments by the parents on

the reading information and prereading activities sent home by the writer (see Appendix F).

The writer's most outstanding success was met in Objective Two. Over a period of eight months, the amount of 40 library books at the daycare center would increase to 200 as counted by the writer and verified by the director. The total count by the director and the writer was 354 books, a clear increase of 314 books which exceeded the goal of 200 by 154 books (see Table 2).

Table 2. Library Books Goal of 200

No. Books 1st Month	No. Books 8th Month	No. Books Increased	No. Books Over Goal	Percent Books Increased
40	354	314	154	785

The tremendous growth in the number of library books was due mainly to the $500 grant the writer won from a community foundation for that purpose and donations of books from the writer who is a member of a preschool book club. The director and two of her teachers also donated some books. There is even a small amount of money left in the grant to purchase some more books.

Objective Three was met through the dedication of one man who was a faithful volunteer for the entire eight months and is still going to remain reading at the daycare center. He was worth two volunteers because he took two time slots and read to two classes. Over the period of eight months the

volunteers did increase from none to four during the fifth month when three woman came for three weeks but they dropped out. Another woman came during the sixth month but only stayed two weeks. The writer recruited volunteers during the first half of the practicum. Four half hour time slots each week were expected to be filled during the second half of the practicum for a total of 32 volunteer hours. The elderly gentleman put in 32 hours by himself since he served two time slots the entire eight months as verified by the director and the writer (see Table 3).

Table 3. Number of Volunteers and Their Hours

Month	No. Volunteers Each Month	Hours
1st	1	4
2nd	1	4
3rd	1	4
4th	1	4
5th	4	8
6th	2	5
7th	1	4
8th	1	4
Totals	5 *	37

*The same man stayed the entire eight months and the four women dropped out.

The total number of volunteers was five and they served 37 hours which exceeded the third objective but not exactly in

the manner the writer expected.

In conclusion, the general goals to address the emergent literacy needs of preschoolers at the daycare center and to enhance their intergenerational experiences were met through the success of the three specific objectives. The children enjoy the numerous new books they can choose from and they especially appreciate their grandfather volunteer reader. The parents have asked for more prereading activities that they can do with their children at home so the writer has made arrangements with the director to provide them as an ongoing service throughout the next school year.

Conclusions

Reading aloud to children is more than a treat, it should be considered a necessity. The writer chose 15 minutes daily as the goal for the first objective since this was the time most often mentioned in the related literature. It also works well with the young child's attention span and the older person's voice strength. Some stories lend themselves to being read aloud better than others so the writer suggested Jim Trelease's (1989) new read-aloud handbook to the daycare parents in her reading information campaign.

Wahl's (1988) focus was on parent activities that would develop a love for reading rather than specific decoding skills. The writer invested in a library of her own which included Elaine Martin's (1988) games for babies, Dr. Mary E. Mayesky's (1990) activities for infants, toddlers, and twos,

Cryer, Harms, and Bourland's (1988) activities for three-year-olds, and Faggella, Hayes, and Leone's (1987) literature activities for four and five-year-olds. These books became invaluable tools for sharing prereading activities with parents that they could do at home.

Parents can help their children become literate if they know how to go about it. Mavrogenes (1990) stresses that teachers and principals make specific suggestions similar to the type of activities the writer sent home. In sharing information with parents, the writer chose to make them aware of books written for them such as Elaine McEwan's (1987) and Jill Hauser's (1990). Excerpts from each are found in Appendix F.

Purchasing the booklet, "Becoming a Nation of Readers," prepared by Binkley (1988) for 97 parents was too expensive at 50 cents a copy so the writer gave them information about it. In it, the Commissioners urge reading aloud to children as the single most important activity in building a literate society. The writer emphasized the importance of the parents' role in helping their children learn to read as did Quintero and Velarde (1990) in their literacy project.

The second objective, to increase the supply of library books from 40 to at least 200, was a challenge monetarily. The daycare center, a new facility, is building its clientele and the increase in preschoolers has made a great demand on its budget. A library of appropriate books was not within its means at this time, although the need was there. It was

fortunate that the writer won the grant of $500 which purchased 160 books. The rest came in through donations. The director and teachers at the center recognized the need for their own on site library and made book donations, also. Bertrand and Fairchild's (1984) study found that preschool children who attend to print in their environment begin to acquire reading skills more quickly. The library placed the needed printed matter in the children's hands, as well as in the hands of the volunteer readers.

Freeman and Hatch (1989) suggest that adults read aloud to children daily and provide opportunities for them to interact with the material presented in books in various ways. In order to enhance children's emergent literacy, they should be exposed to a large collection of children's literature of all types. Since this daycare center is in a new development, the public library is quite a distance away. The writer urged parents to visit the library and order the booklet, "Helping Your Child Use the Library," by Perkinson (1989). It is up to adults to structure the child's environment and provide preschool literary experiences that are a beginning towards enlightenment (Ryan, 1989).

Cooledge and Wurster (1985)) found the retirement community to be a rich resource of people with time to share with children. Since a very large retirement center was a short distance away from the daycare center, the writer chose to solicit her volunteer readers from there. The third objective called for an increase in volunteers from none to

four who would read to the children during four half hour time slots each week for four months during the second half of the practicum.

The writer spent the first four months recruiting volunteers through advertisements in the retirement center's newspaper and by speaking to a group at the center's clubhouse. Many women showed an interest and nine came to orientation meetings the writer conducted at the daycare center. They agreed project GRO sounded like a great idea but transportation was the most immediate problem. Even though the distance was short between the centers they needed transportation that was not forthcoming through the retirement center or public transport. Insurance problems prevented the procurement of the center's trolley for use by the volunteers. The grandfather volunteer had his own car.

Wells (1990) found that joint literacy events with more mature members of the literate culture provided children with experiences in which they could learn to read. With more children spending time in daycare centers, Willer and Bredekamp (1990) want to ensure that adults are able to provide the close attention that a child needs. Volunteers can give attention, become reading role models, and provide intergenerational experiences that many children miss in a mobile society where their grandparents are not living in close proximity.

An intergenerational friendship program was developed by Mersereau and Glover (1990) that took elementary school

children to nursing homes. The writer pursued the idea in reverse, but transportation became a problem and feelings of inadequacy on the part of the drop out volunteers when it came to holding the attention of little ones during story time. Mendoza (1985) encouraged fathers in particular to read to their children because their role model is vital in their children's motivation to read. The grandfatherly volunteer captivated the children's attention and his performance gave strong evidence to the writer's belief that grandparents should volunteer to read to preschoolers and help them grow in literacy acquisition.

In conclusion, this practicum showed that a parent information campaign, an enlarged on site library, and an intergenerational, volunteer read-aloud program can provide opportunities to improve preschoolers' literacy acquisition. The children enjoyed their new books and their grandfatherly volunteer reader. He enjoyed the time he spent reading and discussing the stories with the children and plans to continue the program. The writer was pleased with parent and community reaction to the project and can only hope enthusiasm for reading aloud to children will continue.

Recommendations

The writer has seven specific recommendations based on her observation of the implementation of this practicum. First, the daycare teacher needs her own reference source of materials that can provide parents with prereading activities

they can do at home and share that information with them. Second, daycare administrators should give a higher priority to building a large collection of preschool books necessary for children's literacy acquisition. Third, since money for books is a budget problem, researching for grants available for that purpose and writing them would be a valuable activity for interested child advocates.

For the fourth recommendation, parent questionnaires need to be more flamboyantly publicized in order to generate a higher degree of response. The lack of time on the part of working parents of young children is an ongoing factor in this type of activity. Fifth, personal attention needs to be given to elderly volunteers in the form of orientations, discussion meetings, demonstrations of reading aloud to young children, encouragement, and appreciation. Sixth, free media coverage should be sought for such projects as enlisting volunteers and building a library. Finally, daycare teachers should be encouraged to recognize the importance of a scheduled story time and the potential value of a volunteer read-aloud program. "A wise teacher makes learning a joy;..." (The Living Bible, Proverbs 15:2, 1971, p.511).

Dissemination

The results of this practicum were shared in the following ways. The writer informed the parents of the success in obtaining grant money to build the library and accolades were given to the center's faithful volunteer. The

community became aware of the volunteer read-aloud program and the need to build a library through the parent information campaign. The principal brought the practicum to the attention of the board of directors at the daycare center and it was favorably received. Finally, the writer placed copies of this report in the principal's and daycare director's offices.

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APPENDIX A

PARENTS' PREREADING QUESTIONNAIRE

Parent Questionnaire

1. What age is your child?

   __ 0-1 year, __ 1-2 years, __ 2-3 years,

   __ 3-4 years, __ 4-5 years

2. Do you read to your child?

   __ yes, __ no

3. How often do you read to your child?

   __ daily, __ once a week, __ once in a while

4. How much time do you spend when reading to your child? __ 1-5 min, __ 5-10 min, __ 10-15 min, __ 15-30 min, __ 30 min or more

5. Do you have printed matter available in your home?

   __ newspapers, __ magazines, __ books

6. Do you subscribe to a children's magazine or book club?

   __ yes, __ no

7. Do you think receiving information on how your child learns to read would be helpful to you?

   __ yes, __ maybe, __ no

8. Does your child have grandparents living nearby?

   __ yes, __ no

9. Does your child have an older person or extended family members that would read to them?

   __ yes, __ no

10. Do you feel it is important to read to your child daily?

    __ not very important, __ could be important,

    __ important, __ very important

APPENDIX B

PARENTS' POSTREADING QUESTIONNAIRE

Parent Questionnaire

1. What age is your child?

   __ 0-1 year __ 1-2 years __ 2-3 years __ 3-4 years

   __ 4-5 years

2. Did you read to your child?

   __ every night __ once a week __ once in a while

3. How much time did you spend daily reading to your child?

   __ 15 minutes __ 30 minutes __ 1 hour or more

4. What printed matter is available in your home?

   __ newspapers __ magazines __ books

5. Did you subscribe to a children's magazine or book club?

   __ yes __ no

6. Did you think receiving information on how your child learns to read was helpful to you?

   __ yes __ maybe __ no

7. Did your child tell you about stories read to them at the center?

   __ yes __ no __ I don't know

APPENDIX C

RESULTS OF PARENTS' PREREADING QUESTIONNAIRE

Parent Questionnaire (20 responses)

1. What age is your child?

   __ 0-1 year, (2) 1-2 years, (6) 2-3 years,

   (5) 3-4 years, (7) 4-5 years

2. Do you read to your child?

   (20) yes, __ no

3. How often do you read to your child?

   (13) daily, (4) once a week, (3) once in a while

4. How much time do you spend when reading to your

   child? (1) 1-5 min, (2) 5-10 min, (10) 10-15 min,

   (6) 15-30 min, (1) 30 min or more

5. Do you have printed matter available in your home?

   (16) newspapers, (18) magazines, (20) books

6. Do you subscribe to a children's magazine or book club?

   (10) yes, (10) no

7. Do you think receiving information on how your child

   learns to read would be helpful to you?

   (18) yes, (2) maybe, __ no

8. Does your child have grandparents living nearby?

   (11) yes, (9) no

9. Does your child have an older person or extended family

   members that would read to them?

   (14) yes, (6) no

10. Do you feel it is important to read to your child daily?

    __ not very important, (2) could be important,

    (3) important, (15) very important

*Figures Rounded

Parent Questionnaire (% of 20 responses)

1. What age is your child?

   __ 0-1 year, (10%) 1-2 years, (30%) 2-3 years,

   (25%) 3-4 years, (35%) 4-5 years

2. Do you read to your child?

   (100%) yes, __ no

3. How often do you read to your child?

   (65%) daily, (20%) once a week, (15%) once in a while

4. How much time do you spend when reading to your

   child? (5%) 1-5 min, (10%) 5-10 min, (50%) 10-15 min,

   (30%) 15-30 min, (5%) 30 min or more

5. Do you have printed matter available in your home?

   (80%) newspapers, (90%) magazines, (100%) books

6. Do you subscribe to a children's magazine or book club?

   (50%) yes, (50%) no

7. Do you think receiving information on how your child

   learns to read would be helpful to you?

   (90%) yes, (10%) maybe __ no

8. Does your child have grandparents living nearby?

   (55%) yes, (45%) no

9. Does your child have an older person or extended family

   members that would read to them?

   (70Ds%) yes, (30%) no

10. Do you feel it is important to read to your child daily?

    __ not very important, (10%) could be important,

    (15%) important, (75%) very important

APPENDIX D

RESULTS OF PAARENTS' POSTREADING QUESTIONNAIRE

Parent Questionnaire (14 responses)

1. What age is your child?

   __ 0-1 year, (1) 1-2 years, (5) 2-3 years,

   (1) 3-4 years, (7) 4-5 years

2. Did you read to your child?

   (1) every night, (3) once a week, __ once in a while

3. How much time did you spend daily reading to your child?

   (6) 15 minutes, (8) 30 minutes, __ 1 hour or more

4. What printed matter is available in your home?

   (12) newspapers, (12) magazines, (14) books

5. Did you subscribe to a children's magazine or book club?

   (8) yes, (6) no

6. Did you think receiving information on how your child learns to read was helpful to you?

   (12) yes, (1) maybe, (1) no

7. Did your child tell you about stories read to them at the center?

   (8) yes, (6) no, __ I don't know

* Figures Rounded

Parent Questionnaire (% of 14 responses)

1. What age is your child?

   __ 0-1 year, (7%) 1-2 years, (36%) 2-3 years,

   (7%) 3-4 years, (50%) 4-5 years

2. Did you read to your child?

   (79%) every night, (21%) once a week, __ once in a while

3. How much time did you spend daily reading to your child?

   (43%) 15 minutes, (57%) 30 minutes, __ 1 hour or more

4. What printed matter is available in your home?

   (85%) newspapers, (85%) magazines, (100%) books

5. Did you subscribe to a children's magazine or book club?

   (57%) yes, (S43%) no

6. Did you think receiving information on how your child learns to read was helpful to you?

   (86%) yes, (7%) maybe, (7%) no

7. Did your child tell you about stories read to them at the center?

   (57%) yes, (43%) no, __ I don't know

APPENDIX E

COMPARISON OF PREREADING AND POSTREADING QUESTIONNAIRES

*Figures Rounded

COMPARISON OF PREREADING AND
POSTREADING QUESTIONNAIRES

How often did you read to your child?

	Prereading	Postreading	Positive Gain
Daily	65%	79%	14%

How much time did you spend daily reading to your child?

	Prereading	Postreading	Positive Gain
15 min.	50%	43%	
30 min.	30%	57%	27%

Do you have printed matter available in your home?

	Prereading	Postreading	Positive Gain
Newspapers	80%	85%	5%
Magazines	90%	85%	
Books	100%	100%	Same

Did you subscribe to a children's magazine or book club?

	Prereading	Postreading	Positive Gain
Yes	50%	57%	7%
No	50%	43%	

Did you think receiving information on how your child learns to read was helpful to you?

Yes	90%	86%	
No	10%	7%,	
Maybe		7%	

APPENDIX F

PARENT INFORMATION SAMPLES

Dear Parents,

Our children are fortunate to have a volunteer grandparent, Mr. Ralph Davis, come to read to them each week. Mr. Davis has an extensive background in publishing children's literature and believes in reading aloud to children. We wish to thank him for his faithfulness to project GRO (Grandparents Read Out) and encourage you to search out other grandparents who might like to volunteer. They could contact me at 962-0558 for further details.

Our library continues to grow and any preschool book donations will be greatly appreciated. Over the coming weeks and months I would like to share some information with you from reading authorities and researchers. Attached you will find some prereading activities for each class.

Sincerely,

Patricia M. Budnik
Nova University doctoral student

In her book, How to Raise a Reader, Elaine K. McEwan (1987), answers parents' questions. Researchers, Margaret Clark, Dolores Durkin, and William H. Teale, interviewed parents to discover four common elements in helping their children learn to read as listed below.

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS I CAN DO TO HELP MY CHILD LEARN TO READ?

1. Reading took place in the home. Parents read to children regularly. They themselves read. Reading was a part of the family like-style.

2. A wide range of printed material was available in the home. Magazines, books of all kinds, and newspapers were part of the interior decorating scheme.

3. Children had lots of contact with paper and pencil. (Perhaps in this modern age, our learners will have contact with computer terminals and word processors.) Children were able to produce their own scribbles and scrawls and do their own "writing".

4. Finally, all of the adults in the environment responded to what the child was trying to do. They took very seriously his attempts to make sense out of the written and spoken word. (p. 20)

McEwan, E.K. (1987). How to raise a reader. Elgin, Il: David C. Cook.

Dear Parents,

I want to continue to share ideas with you from Elaine K. McEwan's (1987) book, How to Raise a Reader. I would also encourage you to try the attached prereading activities with your child. Please help yourselves to a couple of magazines in the box and make your home a "print rich" one. Children love the pictures!

Sincerely,

Patricia M. Budnik

WHAT IF THERE ISN'T ENOUGH TIME TO READ ALOUD TO MY CHILD?

I hope I can convince you that you must find the time to read to your child. We know it's almost as important a part of your child's daily routine as brushing his teeth. I have joked with parents that we have all the technology necessary to repair teeth. Repairing reading problems is a far more complex task.

We do have the time - we just don't use it. How about the waiting room at the doctors office? How about while you're waiting for that long freight train? How about when you're dying to put your feet up and relax and the kids won't leave you alone? Whenever you've run

out of entertainment ideas, try a book. One of our favorite times was just before bed. I could almost feel the stress and tension leave our bodies and minds as we quietly read aloud one of our favorites like Good Night Moon or Bedtime for Frances. Reading aloud is a wonderful transition between an active, busy day and your child's willing trip up the stairs to bed. (pp. 21-22)

SHOULDN'T READING INSTRUCTION BE LEFT TO TRAINED TEACHERS IN THE SCHOOLS?

You can leave formal reading instruction to the schools. But think of all of the shared experiences, background, and knowledge your child will bring to formal instruction if you begin reading aloud in infancy. We never can go back to those precious years with their enormous potential for learning once they are gone.

Dr. Burton J. White, a respected physician and researcher at Harvard University in the field of child development, has said, "Relatively few families, perhaps no more than ten percent, manage to get their children through the eight to thirty-six month age period as well educated and developed as they can and should be." (p.24)

McEwan, E.K. (1987) How to raise a reader. Elgin, IL: David C. Cook.

Dear Parents,

Reading is discovering meaning. Jill Frankel Hauser (1990) in her book, Learning and Loving to Read, summarizes its principles:

1. Learning to read print must be part of the ongoing discovery process which began at birth, building on the child's growing knowledge of the world, and of languages learned to communicate and expand that knowledge.
2. Learning to read must center on the discovery of meaning from print. Skills are learned to apply as tools for this discovery, not as ends in themselves.
3. Because they're so interrelated and mutually reinforcing, learning to think, listen, speak, and write must accompany learning to read.
4. Continual opportunities and encouragement must be provided for children to experience the generative dynamics of written language by putting their own ideas into print.
5. Written language must be rich in meaning to children and experienced in whole form as communication vital to the pursuit of their unique interests. (p.11)

Sincerely,

Patricia M. Budnik

Hauser, J.F. (1990). Learning and loving to read. Redding, CA: Learning Excellence.

Dear Parents,

Please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and return it to the center as soon as possible. Reading aloud to children was rated as the single most important activity in building a literate society, according to the commissioners in the report, "Becoming a Nation of Readers," which was condensed into a booklet form and prepared by Marilyn R. Binkley (1988) for the Department of Education.

In Jim Trelease's (1989) new read aloud handbook he urges parents to spend time together with their children since they are the prime role models for language acquisition. A Department of Education booklet, "Helping Your Child Use the Library," written by Kathryn Perkinson (1989), urges parents to visit the public library weekly. The value of reading aloud to children for at least 15 minutes a day has been stressed by many professionals. I hope you have found the information and activities I have sent you useful in persuading you to read aloud to your child.

Sincerely yours,

Patricia M. Budnik
Nova Doctoral Student